

MORMONISM
AND
THE MORMONS:
A
HISTORICAL VIEW
OF THE
RISE AND PROGRESS
OF THE SECT SELF-STYLED
LATTER-DAY SAINTS.

BY DANIEL P. KIDDER.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the LATTER TIMES some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron.—1 TIMOTHY iv, 1-3.

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~ FEATURED WORK ~

In the year 1827 it began to be rumoured that a "Golden Bible," or, in other words, a new revelation, recorded upon plates of gold, had been found in Ontario county, New-York, by one Joseph Smith.

In the year 1830 a publication made its appearance, entitled, "The Book of Mormon,"

purporting to be a translation of said record. Upon the divine authenticity of that book, upon its asserted miraculous preservation "in the bowels of the earth," and upon its equally miraculous discovery and translation, are predicated both the truth and the consistency of the whole system we are now discussing. It consequently becomes us to collect whatever light may be thrown upon the origin of so unusual a publication. Upon the *Book of Mormon* rests the whole fabric of Mormonism: let us examine whether it be not a *sandy* foundation. That was the starting point of the whole prophetic race: let us see whether it is from above or *below*. That is the fountain which has sent forth the whole flood of blessings or of curses attributable to this system: let us prove whether its waters are sweet or bitter.

CHAPTER II.

Character of inspired men—Vicious habits of the Smiths—Cupidity of Harris—A chance lie—Contradictions in maintaining it—A speculation contrived—Money-digging on the Susquehannah—A runaway match—Shocking destitution of moral principle.

WE will indulge for a moment the hypothesis that for wise and worthy reasons God did see proper then and there to make a revelation to the human family. It next becomes important to inquire who are the chosen vessels by whom the Almighty condescended to dispense such grace to the world. From what we know of the former-day saints and prophets, men "of whom the world was not worthy," we should expect if there were any righteous upon earth—any full of faith and of the Holy Ghost—any who were watching with prayers and tears for the coming of the Lord, that the election would be

" *Manchester, Ontario Co., N. Y., Nov. 3, 1833.*

" We, the undersigned, being personally acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen., with whom the Gold Bible, so called, originated, state that they were not only a lazy, indolent set of men, but also intemperate, and their word was not to be depended upon, and that we are truly glad to dispense with their society.

PARDON BUTTS,	WARDEN A. REED,
HIRAM SMITH,	ALFRED STAFFORD,
JAMES GEE,	ABEL CHASE,
A. H. WENTWORTH,	MOSES C. SMITH,
JOSEPH FISH,	HORACE N. BARNES,
SYLVESTER WORDEN."	

" *Palmyra, Dec. 4, 1833.*

" We, the undersigned, have been acquainted with the Smith family for a number of years, while they resided near this place, and we have no hesitation in saying, that we consider them destitute of that moral character which ought to entitle them to the confidence of any community. They were particularly famous for visionary projects, spent much of their time in digging for money which they pretended was hid in the earth; and, to this day, large excavations may be seen in the earth, not far from their residence, where they used to spend their time in digging for hidden treasures. Joseph Smith, Senior, and his son Joseph, were, in particular, considered entirely destitute of *moral character, and addicted to vicious habits.*

" Martin Harris was a man who had acquired a handsome property, and in matters of business his word was considered good; but on moral and religious subjects he was perfectly visionary—sometimes advocating one sentiment, and sometimes another. And in reference to all with whom we were acquainted, that have embraced Mormonism from this neighbourhood, we are compelled to say, were very visionary, and most of them destitute of moral character, and without influence in this community; and this may account why they were permitted to go on with their impositions undisturbed. It was not supposed that any of them were possessed of sufficient character or influence to make any one believe their book

P. Grandin, L. Hurd, Joel Thayer, E. D. Robinson, Asahel Millard, A. Ensworth, Israel F. Chilson."

After these statements, certified by sixty-two men of character and standing, who may be considered as representing the entire community in which this affair took its origin, we may safely regard the character of the persons who "got up" the Book of Mormon as established; at least up to the period when that work was published.

Martin Harris, above and hereafter referred to, was second in importance only to Smith. Indeed, had it not been for *his* money, which he supposed profitably invested, there is no probability that the miraculous book would have ever been published. Thus the discovery and translation of the record would have been equally vain.

It will now be curious to observe several particulars which are vouched for by the regularly-sworn affidavits of different individuals.

1. When Joseph Smith, Jr., first pretended to have found a Golden Bible, it was merely in jest, not expecting that any would be simple enough to believe him. Peter Ingersol, his neighbour and confidential friend, thus testifies:—

"One day he came and greeted me with a joyful countenance.—Upon asking the cause of his unusual happiness, he replied in the following language:—
'As I was passing, yesterday, across the woods, after a heavy shower of rain, I found, in a hollow, some beautiful white sand, that had been washed up by the water. I took off my frock, and tied up several quarts of it, and then went home. On my entering the house, I found the family at the table eating dinner. They were all anxious to know the contents of my frock. At that moment I happened to think of what I had heard about a history found in Canada, called the Golden Bible; so I very gravely told them it was the Golden Bible. To my surprise, they were credulous enough to believe what I said. Accordingly, I told them that I had received a commandment to let no one see it, for, says I, no man can see it with the naked eye and live. However, I offered to take out the book and show it to them, but then

" In the fore part of September, (I believe,) 1827, the prophet requested me to make him a chest, informing me that he designed to move back to Pennsylvania, and expecting soon to get his gold book, he wanted a chest to lock it up, giving me to understand, at the same time, that if I would make the chest he would give me a share in the book. I told him my business was such that I could not make it: but if he would bring the book to me, I would lock it up for him. He said that would not do, as he was commanded to keep it two years, without letting it come to the eye of any one but himself. This commandment, however, he did not keep, for in less than two years twelve men said they had seen it. I told him to get it and convince me of its existence, and I would make him a chest; but he said that would not do, as he must have a chest to lock the book in, as soon as he took it out of the ground. I saw him a few days after, when he told me that I must make the chest. I told him plainly that I could not, upon which he told me that I could have no share in the book.

" A few weeks after this conversation, he came to my house, and related the following story:—That on the 22d of September he arose early in the morning, and took a one-horse wagon, of some one that had stayed over night at their house, without leave or license; and, together with his wife, repaired to the hill which contained the book. He left his wife in the wagon, by the road, and went alone to the hill, a distance of thirty or forty rods from the road; he said he then took the book out of the ground and hid it in a tree-top, and returned home. He then went to the town of Macedon to work. After about ten days, it having been suggested that some one had got his book, his wife went after him; he hired a horse, and went home in the afternoon, stayed long enough to drink one cup of tea, and then went for his book, found it safe, took off his frock, wrapt it round it, put it under his arm, and run all the way home, a distance of about two miles. He said he should think it would weigh sixty pounds, and was sure it would weigh forty. On his return home he said he was attacked by two men in the woods, and knocked them both down and made his escape, arrived safe, and secured his treasure.—He then observed that if it had not been for that stone, (which he acknowledged belonged to me,) he would not have obtained the book. A few days afterward, he told one of my neighbours that he had not got any such book, and

In the spring, 1829, Harris went to Pennsylvania, and on his return to Palmyra, reported that the prophet's wife, in the month of June following, would be delivered of a male child that would be able, when two years old, to translate the Gold Bible. Then, said he, you will see Joseph Smith, Jr., walking through the streets of Palmyra, with a Gold Bible under his arm, and having a gold breast-plate on, and a gold sword hanging by his side. This, however, by the by, proved false.

"In April, 1830, I again asked Hiram for the stone which he had borrowed of me ; he told me I should not have it, for Joseph made use of it in translating his Bible. I reminded him of his promise, and that he had pledged his honour to return it ; but he gave me the lie, saying the stone was not mine, nor never was. Harris at the same time flew in a rage, took me by the collar and said I was a liar, and he could prove it by twelve witnesses. After I had extricated myself from him, Hiram, in a rage, shook his fist at me, and abused me in a most scandalous manner. Thus I might proceed in describing the character of these high priests, by relating one transaction after another, which would all tend to set them in the same light in which they were regarded by their neighbours, viz., as a pest to society. I have regarded Joseph Smith, Jr., from the time I first became acquainted with him until he left this part of the country, as a man whose word could not be depended upon. Hiram's character was but very little better. What I have said respecting the characters of these men will apply to the whole family. What I have stated relative to the characters of these individuals, thus far, is wholly true. After they became thorough Mormons, their conduct was more disgraceful than before. They did not hesitate to abuse any man, no matter how fair his character, provided he did not embrace their creed. Their tongues were continually employed in spreading scandal and abuse. Although they left this part of the country without paying their just debts, yet their creditors were glad to have them do so, rather than to have them stay, disturbing the neighbourhood.

"Signed,

WILLARD CHASE.

"On the 11th of December, 1833, the said Willard Chase appeared before me, and made oath that the foregoing statement, to which he has subscribed his name, is true, according to his best recollection and belief.

FREDERICK SMITH,

"Justice of the peace of Wayne county.

to receive his tales for truth, a moneyed speculation was planned. The following is a part of Henry Harris's affidavit :—

“ Joseph Smith, Jr., the pretended prophet, used to pretend to tell fortunes ; he had a stone which he used to put in his hat, by means of which he professed to tell people's fortunes.

“ Joseph Smith, Jr., Martin Harris, and others, used to meet together in private, a while before the gold plates were found, and were familiarly known by the name of the ‘ Gold Bible Company.’ They were regarded by the community in which they lived as a lying and indolent set of men, and no confidence could be placed in them.

“ The character of Joseph Smith, Jr., for truth and veracity was such, that I would not believe him under oath. I was once on a jury before a justice's court, and the jury could not, and did not believe his testimony to be true. After he pretended to have found the gold plates, I had a conversation with him, and asked him where he found them, and how he came to know where they were. He said he had a revelation from God that told him they were hid in a certain hill, and he looked in his stone and saw them in the place of deposite ; that an angel appeared, and told him he could not get the plates until he was married, and that when he saw the woman that was to be his wife, he should know her, and she would know him. He then went to Pennsylvania, got his wife, and they both went together and got the gold plates—he said it was revealed to him that no one must see the plates but himself and wife.

“ I then asked him what letters were engraved on them ; he said italic letters, written in an unknown*

* He now says Hobrew and Egyptian. Italic letters in Hebrew !

language, and that he had copied some of the words and sent them to Dr. Mitchell and Professor Anthon of New-York. By looking on the plates he said he could not understand the words, but it was made known to him that he was the person that must translate them, and on looking through the stone was enabled to translate.

“ After the book was published, I frequently bantered him for a copy. He asked fourteen shillings a piece for them : I told him I would not give so

plates was true, and that he was in Harmony, Pa., translating them. The old lady said, also, that after the book was translated, the plates were to be publicly exhibited—admittance twenty-five cents. She calculated it would bring in annually an enormous sum of money—that money would then be very plenty, and the book would also sell for a great price, as it was something entirely new—that they had been commanded to obtain all the money they could borrow for present necessity, and to repay with gold. The remainder was to be kept in store for the benefit of their family and children. This and the like conversation detained me till about 11 o'clock. Early the next morning, the mystery of the Spirit (being myself one of the order called Friends) was revealed by the following circumstance :—The old lady took me into another room, and after closing the door, she said, ' Have you four or five dollars in money that you can lend until our business is brought to a close ? the Spirit has said you shall receive four-fold.' I told her that when I gave, I did it not expecting to receive again : as for money, I had none to lend. I then asked her what her particular want of money was ; to which she replied, ' Joseph wants to take the stage and come home from Pennsylvania to see what we are all about.' To which I replied, he might look in his stone and save his time and money. The old lady seemed confused, and left the room, and thus ended the visit.

"In the second month following, Martin Harris and his wife were at my house. In conversation about Mormonites, she observed, that she wished her husband would quit them, as she believed it was all false and a delusion. To which I heard Mr. Harris reply, '*What if it is a lie ; if you will let me alone I will make money out of it !*' I was both an eye and an ear witness of what has been stated above, which is now fresh in my memory, and I give it to the world for the good of mankind. I speak the truth and lie not, God bearing me witness.

"ABIGAIL HARRIS."

Joseph Capron, after detailing sundry necromantic exploits of our hero, adds,—

"At length Joseph pretended to find the gold plates. This scheme, he believed, would relieve the family from all pecuniary embarrassment. His father told me, that when the book was published, they would be enabled, from the profits of the work, to

“ Harmony, Pa., March 20th, 1834.

“ I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr., in November, 1825. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called ‘ money-diggers ;’ and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. In this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure.

“ About this time, young Smith made several visits at my house, and at length asked my consent to his marrying my daughter Emma. This I refused, and gave my reasons for so doing ; some of which were, that he was a stranger, and followed a business that I could not approve : he then left the place. Not long after this he returned, and, while I was absent from home, carried off my daughter into the state of New-York, where they were married without my approbation or consent.

“ Soon after this I was informed they had brought a wonderful book of plates down with them. I was shown a box in which it is said they were contained, which had, to all appearance, been used as a glass box of the common window glass. I was allowed to feel the weight of the box, and they gave me to understand that the book of plates was then in the box—into which, however, I was not allowed to look.

“ I inquired of Joseph Smith, Jr., who was to be the first who would be allowed to see the book of plates. He said it was a young child. After this I became dissatisfied, and informed him that if there was any thing in my house of that description, which I could not be allowed to see, he must take it away ; if he did not, I was determined to see it. After that the plates were said to be hid in the woods.

“ About this time Martin Harris made his appearance upon the stage ; and Smith began to interpret the characters, or hieroglyphics which he said were engraven upon the plates, while Harris wrote down the interpretation. It was said that Harris wrote down one hundred and sixteen pages, and lost them. Soon after this happened, Martin Harris informed me that he must have a *greater witness*, and said that he had talked with Joseph about it.—Joseph informed him that he could not, or durst not show him the plates, but that he (Joseph) would go into the woods where the book of plates was, and that after he came back Harris should follow his track in the snow, and find the book, and examine it for himself. Harris informed me that he followed Smith’s directions, and could not find the plates, and was still dissatisfied.

“ The next day after this happened, I went to the house where Joseph Smith, Jr., lived, and where he and Harris were engaged in their translation of the book. Each of them had a written piece of paper which they were comparing, and some of the words were, ‘ *My servant seeketh a greater witness, but no greater witness can be given him.*’ There was also something said about ‘ *three that were to see the thing*’—meaning, I supposed, the book of plates, and that ‘ *if the three did not go exactly according to the orders, the thing would be taken from them.*’ I inquired whose words they were, and was informed by Joseph or Emma, (I rather think it was the former,) that they were the words of Jesus Christ. I told them

that I considered the whole of it a delusion, and advised them to abandon it. The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the book of plates was at the same time hid in the woods.

"After this, Martin Harris went away, and Oliver Cowdery came and wrote for Smith, while he interpreted, as above described. This is the same Oliver Cowdery, whose name may be found in the Book of Mormon. Cowdery continued a scribe for Smith until the Book of Mormon was completed, as I supposed and understood.

"Joseph Smith, Jr., resided near me for some time after this, and I had a good opportunity of becoming acquainted with him, and somewhat acquainted with his associates, and I conscientiously believe, from the facts I have detailed, and from many other circumstances, which I do not deem it necessary to relate, that the whole 'Book of Mormon' (so called) is a silly fabrication of falsehood and wickedness, got up for speculation, and with a design to dupe the credulous and unwary—and in order that its fabricators may live upon the spoils of those who swallow the deception.

ISAAC HALE.

"Affirmed to and subscribed before me, March 20th, 1834.

"CHARLES DIMON, *Justice of the peace.*

"*State of Pennsylvania, Susquehanna Co., ss.*

"We, the subscribers, associate judges of the court of common pleas, in and for said county, do certify that we have been many years personally acquainted with Isaac Hale, of Harmony township in this county, who has attested the foregoing statement; and that he is a man of excellent moral character, and of undoubted veracity. Witness our hands.

"WILLIAM THOMPSON.

"DAVIS DIMICK.

"March 21st, 1834.

"Rev. N. C. Lewis, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, also certifies and affirms in relation to Smith as follows:—

"I have been acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr., for some time: being a relative of his wife, and residing near him, I have had frequent opportunities of conversation with him, and of knowing his opinions and pursuits. From my standing in the Methodist Episcopal Church, I suppose he was careful how he conducted or expressed himself before me. At one time, however, he came to my house, and asked my advice, whether he should proceed to translate the book of plates (referred to by Mr. Hale) or not. He said that God had commanded him to translate it, but he was afraid of the people: he remarked, that he was to exhibit the plates to the world, at a certain time, which was then about eighteen months distant. I told him I was not qualified to give advice in such cases. Smith frequently said to me that I should see the plates at the time appointed.

"After the time stipulated had passed away, Smith being at my house, was asked why he did not fulfil his promise, show the golden plates, and prove himself an honest man? He replied, that he, himself, was deceived, but that I should see them if I were

where they were. I reminded him then, that I stated at the time he made the promise, I was fearful 'the enchantment would be so powerful' as to remove the plates, when the time came in which they were to be revealed.

"These circumstances, and many others of a similar tenor, embolden me to say, that Joseph Smith, Jr., is not a man of truth and veracity; and that his general character, in this part of the country, is that of an impostor, hypocrite, and liar.

"NATHANIEL C. LEWIS.

"Affirmed and subscribed, before me, March 20th, 1834.

"CHARLES DIMON, *Justice of the peace.*"

Various other statements of similar import were collected in the same vicinity. We subjoin the substance of three which develop some of the worst features of human depravity.

"Alva Hale, son of Isaac Hale, states, that Joseph Smith, Jr., told him that his (Smith's) gift in seeing with a stone and hat, 'was a gift from God,' but also states 'that Smith told him, at another time, that this *peeping* was all d——d nonsense. He (Smith) was deceived himself, but did not intend to deceive others; that he intended to quit the business, (of peeping,) and labour for his livelihood.' That afterward, Smith told him he should see the plates from which he translated the Book of Mormon, and accordingly, at the time specified by Smith, he (Hale) called to see the plates, but Smith did not show them, but appeared angry. He further states, that he knows Joseph Smith, Jr., to be an impostor, and a liar, and knows Martin Harris to be a liar likewise.

"Levi Lewis states, that he has been acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr., and Martin Harris, and that he has heard them both say, adultery was no crime. Harris said he did not blame Smith for his (Smith's) attempt to seduce E. W., &c. Mr. Lewis says that he knows Smith to be a liar;—that he saw him (Smith) intoxicated at three different times while he was composing the Book of Mormon, and also that he has heard Smith, when driving oxen, use language of the greatest profanity. Mr. Lewis also testifies, that he heard Smith say he (Smith) was as good as Jesus Christ;—that it was as bad to injure him as it was to injure Jesus Christ. With regard to the plates, Smith said God had deceived him—which was the reason he (Smith) did not show them.

"Sophia Lewis certifies, that she heard a conversation between Joseph Smith, Jr., and the Rev. James B. Roach, in which Smith called Mr. R. a

d——d fool. Smith also said, in the same conversation, that he (Smith) was as good as Jesus Christ ; and that she has frequently heard Smith use profane language. She states, that she heard Smith say the book of plates could not be opened, under penalty of death, by any other person but his (Smith's) first-born, which was to be a male. She says she was present at the birth of this child, and that it was still-born, and very much deformed."

Such men, we are told by the Mormons, were divinely appointed to usher in the fulness of the gospel. All who will not believe this are to be denounced as children of the devil, and heirs of wrath.

Gov. Boggs, of Missouri, was assassinated in his own house at Independence, on the 7th of May. Rumour was immediately set afloat that some adherent of Mormonism had performed the deed as an act of revenge. We are inclined to believe this a false accusation, which the murderer either invented, or supposed would naturally arise, to screen himself from detection and punishment.

Late accounts from England represent Mormon principles to be rapidly spreading there, in the face of all opposition.

Two ship loads of emigrants have recently arrived at Nauvoo, and another is expected soon.

A Mormon by the name of Nickerson is said to be creating considerable excitement in Boston and its vicinity.

Smith's "fac-similes from the book of Abraham" have been copied in one or two eastern prints, at which circumstance the prophetic editor seems highly elated, not perceiving that both his pictures and himself are the butt of ridicule. He seems to court notoriety at any expense.

Benjamin Winchester, Mormon elder at Philadelphia, has been silenced from preaching, until he makes satisfaction for not obeying the first presidency at Nauvoo.

As a closing comment on *speculative* Mormonism, we subjoin the following statement, on the authority of the newspapers.

"Joe Smith, the Mormon prophet, has applied for the benefit of the BANKRUPT act. His debts, he states, are one hundred thousand dollars. Sidney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith, the other Mormon leaders, have also petitioned."